177 taught some of the traditions in their homes. But they are not
184 committed, openly at least, to the old religion. They are members, and
565 often leaders, of Christian churches. Those who are Catholics look for
554 elements in Catholicism that support Indian values and they are adept at
177 finding Christian analogs for Blackfeet beliefs. Others have joined
184 minor Protestant churches and stress that the predominant Indian
565 attendance at these makes them Indian churches. There is some evidence
554 that many Indian-oriented persons are changing church affiliation
771 frequently and that this is caused possibly by a search for a white
795 church that is most congruent with the Blackfeet religion.[196]

177 The Interpreters participate in Indian ceremonies and are
184 given parts to play in the Sun Dance. They do not have the traditional
565 wisdom required for the roles, but they are Indian leaders who are
554 sympathetic and "good." They tend to express Indian values, and sub-
[796] scribe to Indian symbols. Interpreters put up a tepee for Indian Days,
[186] wear a Chiefly costume on appropriate occasions, stress their Indian
names and belong to a men's society.

In addition to their Indian training, these men have had the opportunity to get a good education in American schools, to travel and otherwise become experienced with much of white culture. They are capable of competing with the white-oriented, and through ability, hard work and some economic success, are well accepted by the white-oriented community. They could succeed on their own in any rural off-reservation community. The Interpreters are not wealthy. They usually earn good

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[794] [196] The Blackfeet have not accepted the peyote cults even though these are active in reservations in the surrounding region.

21: Hungry Wolf F-4,5 (ca. 1972) 1977
NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

things that inspired their sacred life were on display in glass cases several hundred miles away. 778 771

The Alberta Provincial Museum was highly successful in obtaining what it wanted by paying high prices to our People. Bundles once transferred for a few horses and blankets were suddenly "exchanged" for hundreds and thousands of dollars. Sometime in the early 1960s, I was visiting friends on the South Piegan Reserve, where the son of an aging Medicine Pipe Owner told me the exaggerated story about a museum up in Canada offering ten thousand dollars for a Medicine Pipe Bundle. 178 182 778 439 177 114 [435]

The following is an account of the Alberta Museum's transactions concerning one of our sacred Bundles. It is perhaps the most notorious acquisition from among the Bloods.

THE SALE OF OUR LONG-TIME PIPE

Most of our Medicine Pipe and Beaver Bundles are very old. No one knows exactly how many years ago they were first made. Among all our divisions, there is one particular Bundle that has been regarded with special awe and respect. This Bundle is so old that even back when our People still knew our ancient legends and histories, no one remembered ever hearing of a time when it was not among us. For that reason the Bundle has always been known as *Mesam-Achkuineman*, or "Long-Time Pipe." Except for a few repairs and additions, this Bundle is without metal or glass objects; nothing is in it that came from a trading post or store. Stories are still told about some of its long-ago Keepers who gave up dogs for transfer payments, because our People were then without horses. 778

Our sacred Long-Time Pipe was an anthropological prize that lay beyond the hopes of most museums and collectors. Respect for it was shared by virtually all of our People, even the Christianized majority. Its future among the Bloods was [795]

[p. 84-B]

Owner, who was no longer on the museum's staff, had told everyone after he left that the museum would no longer cooperate in honoring its claim to make the Bundle available to our People. The white-man Owner had also claimed that all museum materials and papers had become classified to outsiders, including himself.

Although we were pleased to learn we could have the Bundle for ceremonies, we nevertheless began discussing the possibility of taking the Bundle back to the reserve permanently, and selecting a member to act as "new Keeper," or even placing it in the charge of the tribe as a whole. For as we since learned, the former museum official, having divested himself of any responsibility to our artifacts, had been selling our Bundles at even higher prices to collectors of Indian relics. Here is an account of one of his more recent transactions:

This story involves our uncle, Atsitsina, one of our favorite companions. He enjoys staying with us and teaching us the many things that he knows of our Old Ways. Atsitsina was Keeper of two Medicine Pipe Bundles. One was owned before him by his long-gone father, Sun Chief, or Eagle Plume. Atsitsina transferred this sacred Bundle just a few years ago to a young man named Harrison Black Plume. His father, Bob Black Plume, was a leader of our holy ceremonies until recently, when he gave up our Old Ways for the way of the Full Gospel Church. Young Black Plume had vowed to take the Bundle during a family illness, so our uncle did not withhold it. Since Black Plume had little to give in the way of material exchange, Atsitsina offered him the Bundle and told him he would take it back at a later time, after the vow had been fully completed. Meanwhile, the white-man official had already offered Atsitsina a tempting amount of cash for the Bundle. When Atsitsina gave young Black Plume the Bundle, he warned him that under no condition was he to "give the Pipe to that white man." Black Plume gladly acknowledged he would not.

[p. 88-A]

36: Dempsey H-4,5 (1952) 1956 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Blood

promise between the old and the new. The pre-Lent dance, for example, is the last dance for forty days, as the Bloods, who are predominantly Anglican (Episcopalian) and Roman Catholic, forego dancing during Lent. This is the first year of the pre-Lent dance and is another step in the adaptation of native ceremonies to modern customs.

Another sponsor of dances, as mentioned earlier, is the Horn Society. This totally non-Christian religious group has also shown a compromise with the Church by sponsoring the annual Christmas Dance. A powerful society even today, the Horns play a vital role in the summer Sun Dance (*okan*) ceremonies, which are the basis of the native religion of the Bloods.

Members for the Horns are taken from the age-group societies and, originally, were changed every four years. However, the period of membership in the Horns has lately varied from two to four years, depending upon the activity of the group. Membership in this society is decided upon in an alternating pattern similar to the dance sponsorships. For example, the Horn Society members were chosen from the Eagle society in 1951 and, upon the completion of their term, one of the odd-numbered societies will provide the new members.

During the sponsorship of the Christmas dance, the Horns may also call upon the allies of their parent group for assistance. During the 1952 Christmas dance, the Horns, who were predominantly from the Eagles, were permitted to seek assistance from any of the even-numbered societies.

Thus, through this complex social organization, a keen and wholesome rivalry is constantly being stimulated to produce the best dances. Some members are ordered to provide food or soda pop; some decorate the hall and set the stage for the important night. Other members of the group, whether rich or poor, are solicited for gifts of cash or blankets to meet the heavy expenses of the evening.

In speaking to a member of the Magpies shortly before the New Year's dance, it was learned that he had been ordered to bring fifty sandwiches and would be fined $10 by his society if he failed to comply.

The recognized leaders of the society sponsoring a dance usually divide the responsibilities as much as possible among their own group and then turn to their allies for specialized assistance. The principal specialists needed for an Owl Dance are the singers, a dance announcer, and the Chicken Dancers.

The singers both carry the tempo of the dance on the drum and accompany it with the traditional Owl Dance songs. Therefore, to make sure the music will be of the highest quality, the societies call upon certain members who are outstanding in singing for each dance sponsored by their allies. Such men as Percy Plainswoman, Harry Shade, and Alex Little Shield are typical examples of the singers who are most likely to be called upon whenever an allied society presents a dance.

So, too, with the dance announcer. This man is responsible for urging the people to dance and for announcing changes in the dancing routine. Both the even-numbered and odd-numbered societies have two or three elders who are particularly adept at announcing, and they are continually called upon to take part in the activities.

The Chicken Dancers are the men who provide the entertainment at the dance. After every Owl Dance, these gaily-clad performers strut onto the floor and imitate the intricate steps of a male prairie chicken vying for the favor of a hen. These dancers make use of sleigh bells, hoops, masks, feathers, and colorful clothing to put on an

54: Lancaster F-3(1958-1966)1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

cially easy to accept. A crucifix constituted a nifty recruit to the warrior's collection of protective amulets and charms, and when a priest endowed the converted Blackfoot with the name of a Catholic saint, this was to the Indian very much like his own custom of taking a new name (very often the name of a former chief or hero of his tribe) upon the occasion of achieving a significant coup against the enemy. To this day, a substantial number of Blackfoots have as a given name the name of a saint. Offhand I can think of Evangeline Big Beaver, Theresa Bull Child, Dennis Bad-Old-Man, Michael Scabby Robe, Bernard Red Head, Ursula Running Crane, Theola Cut Finger, Bernadette Red Head, Clement Big Springs, Serena Little Dog, Paul Calf Looking, Calvin Kicking Woman, Jason Dusty Bull, Rufus Good Striker, Terrence Little Bull, Angeline Old Person, Maurice Red Horn, Frederick Takes Gun, Francis Bull Shoe, Agnes Comes-At-Night, Woodrow Calf Robe, Anthony Mountain Chief, Tyrone White Grass, Hiram Daniel Calf Looking, Aaron Skunk Cap . . . There are many others.

The names Joseph and Mary are especially popular here on the Reservation, and the Chief once mentioned that he used to have an aunt named John—which is not at all funny if you know anything about the Blackfoots and their language. Blackfoot names have no sexual connotation, and a female is distinguished from a male by having the suffix *ákí* (woman) added to her name. Incidentally, although popular fiction would have us believe that all Indian maidens are called "Shining Water" or "Morning Star," the truth is that Blackfoot girls, who were (and usually still are) named by a male relative or by some prominent male member of the tribe, were *not* named in imitation of some aesthetic object or experience. They were named in honor of a particularly notable war achievement by the name-giver, and instead of being named "Sweet Prairie Flower," a girl was more apt to go through life as "Kills Instead," "Found A Gun," or "Two Cutter" (the actual Indian names of some very fine Blackfoot ladies of my acquaintance).

Whatever the reason for the success or failure of the early Catholic missionaries, the strength of the Roman Church on the Reservation today (take it from a Protestant who knows) is in the presence here of such men as Father Mallman, the marvelous old Jesuit priest who has been ministering to the Catholic faithful down at Heart Butte for God-knows-how-many years. Father Mallman loves and understands the Blackfoots, and the Blackfoots love and respect the Father in turn. The Catholic congregation at Heart Butte is large and faithful in attendance, and if some members celebrate Mass

54: Lancaster F-3(1958-1966)1966 NF6 Blackfoot NF6
Piegan
Montana

and Blackfoot religious ceremonies back to back, and if a Blackfoot religious article slips into the grave at a good Catholic funeral, and if the grave is decorated not with flowers but with yard goods, blankets, tobacco or children's toys, the good Father does not see these things. His concern is with lives and with souls, not with gestures, and perhaps this is one of the reasons that all the Blackfoots, of whatever religious belief, hold him in such high regard.

Volumes could be written about Father Mallman, but I think that a single anecdote of recent occurrence will suffice. It is no secret that when an elderly "long-hair," a member of the Father's congregation, was laid to rest with Catholic rites a few years ago, a horse was killed in the man's honor (an ancient Indian gesture of respect for the deceased). And when some sanctimonious grimalkin came tattling to Father Mallman about the horse, the Father's only comment was that he hoped it had been a very good horse because the deceased had been a very good Catholic.

I think that the basically syncretistical attitude of the Blackfoot toward Christianity—an attitude which *must* be understood if one is to achieve any real understanding of the Indian himself—is well expressed in a story which the Chief told me four years ago, after he had adopted me as his son. This was the traditional Blackfoot story of the Creation, and although it became apparent as the story unfolded that much of the traditional Christian belief had by now become incorporated into the Blackfoot tradition, it became apparent too that here was not only a classic of American Indian legendry but a classic statement of philosophical and religious tolerance from which our overly sophisticated modern world might well derive a meaningful lesson.

The occasion of the Chief's telling this story also hosted my first attempt to transcribe Blackfoot into English, and a rereading of this virginal effort never fails to paint my downy cheek with the rubescence of embarrassment. There was nothing wrong with my translation—that was fine—but when it came to preparing the story for publication I apparently felt compelled to imitate the asininities of certain of my predecessors in the field of Indian study because I loaded the phrasing with such conventional Indian corn as, "Hear me!" and "I have spoken!" Granted that a word-for-word translation of Blackfoot into English would not be possible, and granted also that these lofty phrases represent a perfectly valid interpretation of the meanings implicit in the Blackfoot phrases from which they were taken, the fact remains that the very same Blackfoot phrases could with equal validity have been rendered as, "Get this straight, Bus-